

Accessing Positive Activities: Enabling young people to travel by bus

Summary report for young people



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for The National Youth Agency


The National Youth Agency
Information and Research
Getting it right for young people

Brunel
UNIVERSITY
WEST LONDON

ACCESSING POSITIVE
ACTIVITIES: ENABLING
YOUNG PEOPLE TO
TRAVEL BY BUS

Introduction

Young people need to travel and their transport requirements are moving up the political agenda. The National Youth Agency asked Brunel University to carry out research exploring some of the growing number of innovative schemes developed by local authorities and bus companies to encourage young people to use buses. This is a summary of the research for young people – the full report is available and can be downloaded at www.nya.org.uk

The research visited four areas (Isle of Wight, Suffolk, Surrey, West Sussex) which have developed innovative schemes to encourage young people to travel by bus. In two of these locations, 20 young people took part in discussions about their experiences of travel.



Barriers to buses

Young people told us they face a number of problems when trying to use buses, including:

- **Cost.** The cost of bus fares can prevent young people from using buses. This relates both to the price of fares and also the age at which full fare becomes payable. Many young people have to pay adult fares although they may have little or no income:

'It used to cost more for the bus, £7 than it did to get into the cinema, which was £5. When I was 14, that seemed an awful lot of money.' (Larry, 18, Isle of Wight)

- **Availability.** The lack of bus services in some places is a problem, particularly when wanting to travel in the evenings or late at night, and also in rural areas:

'If the buses run more frequently, then that might make people travel... the main thing is doing what you want when you want. You can't often due to the times of buses.' (Charlotte, 15, West Sussex)

'Our (bus) stops at an early time. When it's a bit late, and I need a bus, I can't, I have to walk, it's quite far (to the village).' (Yasir, 16, West Sussex)

- **Reliability.** Buses are often seen as unreliable. Young people told us that buses often tend to run late or are cancelled without notice:

'I could say they are reliable where I live, but they are not punctual. They come, but not very punctual.' (Daniel, 15, West Sussex)

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- **Safety.** Very few young people identify safety as a problem, although many of the adults we spoke to said it is often a concern for parents:

'Sometimes I do (feel safe), but if I'm upstairs on my own or only with one other person I do feel a bit cautious and go downstairs to be closer to the driver. Sometimes I do feel a bit uncomfortable'. (Sharon, 16, Isle of Wight)

- **Attitudes of bus drivers and the bus environment.** Some think bus drivers are very unwelcoming to young people, although others think that at least some are friendly. Similarly, many bus environments are described as very poor, although others are very high quality.

'The buses we have are grimy, horrible, really loud and you have parts which are really loose and rattle the whole way there. You shove a bit of paper in it to stop it rattling. So it can be a nightmare'. (Simon, 16, West Sussex)

'I love them, they have air conditioning. They are nice and sleek'. (Jake, 14, Isle of Wight)

- **Expectations about travel.** Many young people said they would prefer to travel by car and want to stop using buses and drive once they are old enough:

'What really gets me is there is a really big drive for green transport, not to take planes, use public transport- but when you are young you have it constantly that public transport is expensive, its unreliable. By the time you get to be an adult, you think "well, I might as well just get a car.' (Youth Worker, West Sussex)

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The four schemes

There are a growing number of diverse innovative schemes developed by local authorities and bus companies to encourage young people to use buses. These include the introduction of a discounted bus fare schemes, an increase the age at which full fare is payable, and dedicated services enabling young people to access specific events or activities. The research looked at four schemes:

On the **Isle of Wight**, the **Student Rider Scheme** was introduced in Spring 2006. Young people aged 5-19 in full time education pay a flat 50p fare on all bus (and rail) journeys on the Island. This raised the age limit of discount fare from 14 to 19, and reduced ticket prices by up to £3.60 per single journey.





We have a lot more buses with CCTV. Newport bus station has opened in the last year which has got CCTV everywhere, it's well lit. Ryde bus station will be replaced as well. The whole environment is getting better.

In a town in **Suffolk**, a **free minibus service** was introduced in September 2006, running one night per week to enable young people to access a youth club in another town 8 miles away.

In some parts of **Surrey** a **taxibus** scheme has been operating since 2002. Each year, up to 80 young people are given up to £154 of taxi vouchers to enable them to directly access education, employment or leisure facilities- or to enable them to access public transport.

In **West Sussex**, the **3 in 1 YourCard** scheme began in Autumn 2007. The card gives discount bus fares for young people (quarter fare for under 16s, half fare for 16-19 year olds in full time education). The card is also an ID card and discount card which can be used in a variety of shops and services.

Benefits of the scheme

Participants in the research told us that schemes have a wide range of benefits for young people, including:

- Encouraging young people to use buses more than they had done before:

*'It has effected us quite a lot- I find that I go out more than I would normally do because the buses are so cheap, I find that I use them a lot more'.
(Tim, 17, Isle of Wight)*

- Encouraging new young bus users, who may not have previously used buses:

'I just never went on the buses (before the Student Rider Scheme). I would get a lift, I'd rather do that as I'm not prepared to pay that much money to go somewhere. So it (the Student Rider Scheme) gives you more freedom'. (Kath, 17, Isle of Wight)



- Enabling young people to travel safely:

'We have a lot more buses with CCTV. Newport bus station has opened in the last year which has got CCTV everywhere, it's well lit. Ryde bus station will be replaced as well. The whole environment is getting better. Moving from double deck to single deck'. (Bus operator, Isle of Wight).

- Enabling young people to access a variety of opportunities. These include leisure activities such as meeting friends, travelling to towns, visiting youth clubs and going to the cinema, going to school or college and employment opportunities, such as paid or voluntary work:

'It's also really good for young people, we can use the facilities on the island a lot more as well. Access is far, far greater.' (Peter, 19, Isle of Wight)



'Young people are going to get much more of a life, from being able to access more things... that goes for sports and leisure centres, any amenity really.'
(Youth Worker, Isle of Wight)

'I've been working, voluntary work. I get the bus.' (Jake, 14, Isle of Wight)

- Increasing young people's disposable income, as less has to be spent on travelling to places:

'It won't make that much of a difference to how much I travel. I have enough money to pay for the bus everyday, it will just make it cheaper. More spare cash.'
(Simon, 16, West Sussex)

- Changing young people's future expectations about travel. At least some young people said that the initiative has stopped- or at least delayed – their intention to own and/or travel by car.

'There is less incentive to learn to drive, since the bus service is so cheap.'
(Larry, 18, Isle of Wight)

Some young people told us that other people may perceive some problems resulting from increasing young people's use of buses, most notably a perceived increase in anti social behaviour:

'They (young people) play loud music at the back, which is annoying, and the other thing is they buy sweets in town and litter the whole of the back of the bus. Cans start rolling down and it makes a complete mess of the bus. And that's just after a normal day at school.' (Simon, 16, West Sussex)

Young people are going to get much more of a life, from being able to access more things... that goes for sports and leisure centres, any amenity really.



My parents have said they'll put me on the insurance of one of the cars – we have two cars. Once the student rider scheme finishes, when I'm in my gap year or something, it's going to be much more expensive to travel.

What else needs to be done?

Young people told us there were still some barriers which they faced when trying to use buses.

Affording the full fare

One of the problems young people still faced was the transition to full fare- either at age 16 or (as in the case of some of the examples in this research) at age 19:

'The reason I am thinking ahead (of driving) is that my parents have said they'll put me on the insurance of one of the cars – we have two cars. Once the student rider scheme finishes, when I'm in my gap year or something, its going to be much more expensive to travel'. (Vicky, 16, Isle of Wight)

Andy: *'When you get to 19, you'll have to pay full fare ...'*

Larry: *'Yeah, I'm not looking forward to that ...'* (both 18, Isle of Wight)

Ensuring schemes keep running:

Although each scheme had financial support from local authorities or elsewhere, not all had ongoing support. At least one of the schemes was in danger of stopping because of a lack of funding:

'There's always the problem of a lack of funding, and when the funding is going to run out we will start again and see if we can get it'. (Youth Worker, Suffolk)

Involving young people in planning bus services

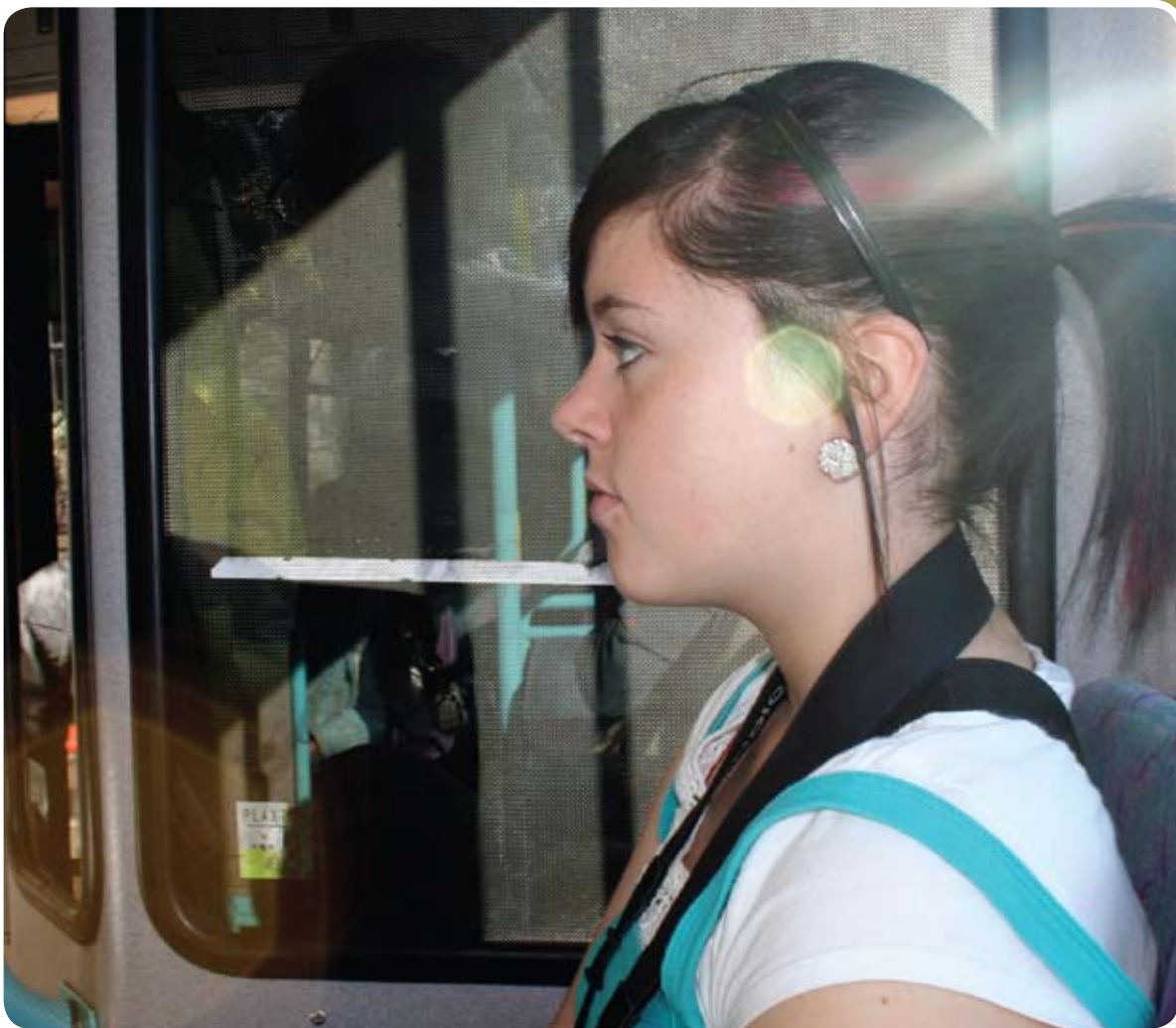
The research shows how important it is to involve young people in planning bus services to ensure that bus services meet your needs. Some of the initiatives we visited had been developed in response to young people's demands. On the Isle of Wight, the Student Rider Scheme responded to a long campaign (including a 3000 signature petition) by young people to reduce the cost of travel:

'Looking back at Wight to be Heard (an annual youth conference) and the youth council and the 3000 signature petition, they decided that they had to do something'. (Claire, 16, Isle of Wight)

'I was one of the people who started the ball rolling. We came up with this agreement with the bus companies. It took so long to get through – about four years, it has taken that long'. (Simon, West Sussex)

There are many ways that you can become involved if you want to help improve bus services for young people. You can work with your school council, or contact your local youth forum or youth council and talk to them. Young people have key roles to play in identifying a particular problem, raising awareness and lobbying local authorities for change and participating in planning and designing specific initiatives.

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Photos: Stevie Woodland
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The National Youth Agency

works in partnership with young people and with organisations and services to ensure better outcomes for young people. It is an independent, development organisation located between government and funding bodies on the one hand and service providers and their users on the other.

We strive to ensure that the work of services and organisations is:

- relevant to the lives of young people;
- responsive to policy;
- effective and of a high standard;
- efficient and provides good value; and
- successful in securing the best outcomes for young people.


Our five strategic aims are:

- **Participation:** promoting young people's influence, voice and place in society.
- **Professional practice:** improving youth work practice, programmes and other services for young people.
- **Policy development:** influencing and shaping the youth policy of central and local government and the policies of those who plan, commission and provide services for young people.
- **Partnership:** creating supporting and developing partnerships between organisations to improve services and outcomes for young people.
- **Performance:** striving for excellence in The Agency's internal workings.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of The National Youth Agency.

For more information on our research programme, see www.nya.org.uk/research

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